

talks could succeed; although, of course, there was no guarantee.

I was happy to agree because I knew that even if there was a chance to get something positive and tangible done on gun safety, it was worth the effort. So I told Senator MURPHY I would give him the space he needed. That quickly became the consensus of our caucus and the consensus of many of our gun safety advocates who pressed us to secure real progress. Senator MURPHY and I called them the day after Uvalde, and they agreed, get something done, even if it wouldn't be everything we would all want.

We were all on the same page. Instead of voting on a bill that would fail, we would try and get something real passed in the Senate. In the end, it was the right decision because before long we had a bipartisan guns framework. A week later, we had legislative text. A few days ago, that bill came before the Senate with strong bipartisan votes. And today—today—we can take final steps to passing the first major gun safety bill in nearly 30 years.

As I said, this is not a cure-all for all the ways gun violence affects our Nation, but it is a long overdue step in the right direction. It is significant; it is going to save lives; and it is my intention to get it done as soon as we can.

I want to thank all of my Democratic and Republican colleagues for working together to reach this point, and I want to thank the leaders of the effort: Senators MURPHY and SINEMA, Senators CORNYN and TILLIS, as well as all of our colleagues on the bipartisan working group, all of our chairs and Members who contributed their expertise and their leadership in shaping the bill. I also want to thank every single survivor of gun violence, every family who has spoken up, every advocate who has organized, and every voter and concerned citizen who has pushed this body to take action for so many years. Even with the holes in their heart, the lost loved ones through needless, cruel gun violence, so many advocates persisted and persisted and persisted. And without them keeping that candle burning, even in the darkest of moments, we wouldn't have gotten this done. I salute them. I thank them. America thanks them. And I say to all of them, all the advocates who worked so hard and so long on this, very soon your efforts will bear real fruit.

We are going to keep going until we finish the job. So I urge my colleagues to reach an agreement with us to do precisely that.

REMEMBERING LEONA I. FAUST

Now, Madam President, on a different and sadder subject, I wish to offer a few words this morning in honor of Leona Faust, the Senate Librarian, who passed away after decades of working to serve in this body.

In Psalm 19, it is written:

Day after day they pour forth speech;
Night after night they reveal knowledge.

This Chamber is well accustomed to long speeches from many Members day

after day, but for a century and a half, it has been the responsibility of one person, the Senate Librarian, to help reveal, preserve, and safeguard the knowledge and work of this body. For 44 years, that was the work Leona dedicated herself to with intelligence and grace.

Leona's first day on the job was very different from what library employees might encounter today. When she was first hired in 1978, her responsibilities were primarily to manage hundreds of calls that came every day inquiring about the status of this or that piece of legislation.

In time, Leona, who became the Librarian in 2010, worked dramatically to improve the efficiency of the Library. She modernized it, digitized it, and made it far more accessible for Members and their staffs. Her accomplishments forever changed the way information flows across the Senate and democracy—democracy itself—is better off for her work.

But most of all today, we pay tribute to Leona not for what she did but for what she was—a beloved member of the Senate community, a friend to so many, and someone whom we will miss very, very dearly.

Today, all of us keep her memory permanently in our hearts and her family in our prayers.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM WALSH

Madam President, I want to congratulate our Journal Clerk Billy Walsh on his retirement from the Senate.

The Senate could not function without the hard-working staff here in the Chamber. Billy began his career as assistant bill clerk, and he has been with us for 19 years. A native of Cumberland, MD, he is retiring as the 21st Journal Clerk of the U.S. Senate.

We all wish him a happy and healthy retirement. And as Billy has said, "Those umbrella drinks by the ocean aren't going to drink themselves."

Enjoy your libations and your retirement—to the wonderful, wonderful, wonderful and always smiling Billy Walsh.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

BIPARTISAN SAFER COMMUNITIES ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the American people do not have to choose between safer schools and the Constitution, and neither does the U.S. Senate.

The American people want their constitutional rights protected and their kids to be safe in school. They want both of those things at once, and that is just what the bill before the Senate will help accomplish.

Thanks to the leadership and dedication of Senator CORNYN, Senator TILLIS, and several of their counterparts across the aisle, we are considering a bipartisan bill that will make

our country safer without making it any less free. This is the sweet spot: making America safer, especially for kids in school, without making our country one bit less free.

The legislation before us would make our communities and schools safer without laying one finger on the Second Amendment for law-abiding citizens. Its key provisions are hugely popular with the American people. This bill supplies significant new funding to law enforcement and police, to school security, and to mental health treatment both in school and in the wider community.

Under this bill, if a teenager has been convicted of a crime or adjudicated to be mentally ill, even before their 18th birthday, that important information will show up in a firearms background check until they are 21. This strengthens the existing background check system without expanding it.

States will receive new money for crisis intervention programs of their own choosing, and if they choose to use the money for so-called red flag laws, those laws will have to meet a new, higher standard for due process.

This is a commonsense package. Its provisions are very, very popular. It contains zero—zero—new restrictions, zero new waiting periods, zero mandates, and zero bans of any kind for law-abiding gun owners.

Police and law enforcement support the bill strongly. The police chiefs' association and the Fraternal Order of Police say: "This bipartisan measure is . . . one that will save lives," according to the FOP and the police chiefs' association.

The National Sheriffs' Association calls it:

A bill that can actually save lives . . . that allows the States to craft their own unique answers to the questions raised by gun violence.

After years—literally years—of liberal demands that would make war on citizens' constitutional rights, our Democratic colleagues have finally accepted that we can make schools and communities safer without impeding on the Second Amendment.

We can do more to protect innocent Americans, schoolkids especially, without—without—eroding the Bill of Rights 1 inch, and that is just what the Senate will do when we pass this bill.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Madam President, speaking of public safety, as the Supreme Court prepares to issue its final opinions of the term, far-left activists are openly calling for riots and violence in the streets.

For months, many of the country's most prominent Democrats have indulged in reckless talk and irresponsible rhetoric, fanning the flames of fear and rage among their supporters. This poisonous climate has illegal mobs assembling outside Justices' private family homes and has prompted one unhinged person to travel across the country for the purpose of committing an assassination.